

BOOK REVIEWS

Quarterly Journal, National Centre for the Performing Arts, Bombay.

The first issue of this new journal holds out the promise that a special forum will now be available for the discussion of tradition and change in the fields of music, dance and drama.

Dr. Narayana Menon's article on Indian music is a synoptic survey of the tradition meant as a first introduction for foreigners who have grown up in musical traditions which have accented different values like, for instance, harmony instead of melody. While he stresses the important point that the Indian singer is virtually a composer too, he has an oblique comment on the neglect of voice training in our tradition. In India we have till now taken the line that the quality of the voice is no more of an asset to a singer than, say, good handwriting is to a poet.

Since the emergence of the *Khyal*, the *gharanas* have proliferated and it is a very serious lacuna in our musicology that precise analyses of the stylistic distinctions of the various schools have not so far been undertaken in a systematic manner. Vamanrao Deshpande contributes a study on the Jaipur *gharana*. He rightly stresses that the merit of this style lies not only in its happy synthesis of the various developed strands in the melodic line, but also in its keen sense of design and structure. This latter not only pervades a piece as a whole but also each individual *tala avartana*. The design of each such *avartana* consists in a pre-planned scheme of building up a tension which would mount slowly up to a point preceding the *mukhda* (the burden of the song-text) which constitutes its resolution. Again the placing of each such *avartana* is so conceived that the tension generated by it is always higher than that of the preceding *avartana*, followed by its immediate resolution on the *sama*. And the process goes on till the end of the piece, with the tension poised at its highest point immediately before a grand resolution at the end.

This is the type of analysis we want and it is fervently hoped that the journal in its subsequent issues will offer similar discussions of the other *gharanas* like *Kirana*, *Agra*, *Patiala*, etc. We also need to know the modulation of tradition in the case of the individual artistes who broadly belong to it. Deshpande discusses Alladiya Khan and Kesarbai Kerkar but the data are biographical rather than analytical. If this can be looked after and a series brought out, it will be a valuable contribution.

P.L. Deshpande's article on Vishnu Digamber Paluskar is written under some strain, as the author is not in rapport with Paluskar's style as

available today in the practice of his disciples like Vinayakrao Patwardhan. But it does bring out the fact that this country has not always been responsive to dedicated efforts by men of genius and noble intentions. The Gandharva Mahavidyalaya did not last long. Its edifice was auctioned. But Paluskar's system of music education has been widely adopted.

During the last years of his life Paluskar toured the country extensively, giving discourses on the *Ramayana*. Another article in this issue, by Dr. Suresh Awasthi, traces the tremendous influence this great epic has had on the theatre tradition in India and South East Asia. Another very interesting article is Heimo Rau's "Goethe and Kalidasa". Goethe's tribute to *Sakuntala* is very well-known. But not many people know of Herder's interest in the play or Goethe's acquaintance with the *Méghaduta*.

The get-up and printing are excellent, but the price (Rs. 7.50) may limit the journal to institutional subscription.

—Krishna Chaitanya

Sangeetache Soundrya Shastra, by Ashok Damodar Ranade, Marathi, Published by Aesthetics Society, — Mouj Prakasan Griha, Bombay, 1971, pp. 118, Price Rs. 6/-.

It is a pleasure to review a book that talks about things worth talking about. One rarely meets a work on the aesthetics of Indian music which is incisive in logic and faces facts squarely, instead of hiding behind vague and puerile language. Much of what we come across from the pen of music critics is of very low order. True, they criticize and hence one could call them critics; but there their capacity seems to end. The rest is all verbiage and transferred epithets.

Ranade's book is a refreshing departure from this. It is a very careful esthetic analysis of musical processes.

The book is based on the translations (into Marathi) of the author's lectures delivered under the auspices of Aesthetics Society, Bombay, and the Centre for Indian Writers, Poona.

There are four chapters in the following order:

1. Fundamental concepts — *Svara*
2. Fundamental concepts — *Laya*
3. *Gharanas* in Indian Music
4. Musical forms.

The source material from which the author draws his facts is Hindu music and this work has to be read within that perspective.

As far as is known to this reviewer, this is one of the very few books that gets down to fundamentals right from the beginning and sticks to them throughout.

The author formulates three foundational units in music — note (*svara*), tempo (*laya*) and form (*bandish*) and further discusses them. Under *svara* he has four constructive elements: noise (?), *dhvani*, *nada* (musically useable

sound) and *svara*. There is an interesting study of tonal configuration, the scale, tonality and so on.

The discussion in *raga*, its relation to colour, to time though brief is interesting. Basic ideas of time is rhythm—*laya*, and *tala*, then follow. A stimulating chapter.

The chapter on *gharanas* is indeed interesting. The questions asked by the author are: *What is a gharana?* What is their origin? Which are the more important *gharanas* and *why* are they so? This *why* is certainly a ticklish query and has been asked, most probably, for the first time. And, finally, what is the future of *gharanas*. Ranade's approach merits serious consideration. (The present reviewer has suggested elsewhere that *gharanas* could be considered as dialects of musical language).

The last chapter is an on musical forms: *dhrupad, khyal, tarana, chaturang, thumri, ghazal, tappa*. This is certainly, to my mind, the best part of the book. The discussion avoids vagueness but centres round the aesthetics, the psychology and the formal aspects.

Ranade's book is, in short, a very fine attempt at logical thinking on music: not a phenomenon usually met with. To postulate one's axioms and continue on their basis is certainly welcome.

The only drawback is the complicated language he uses. As lectures with explanations and demonstrations this might not have been a hurdle. But it makes difficult reading, but then axiomatic writing has put limitations on the easy flow of literary style.

B. C. Deva